

Tips for Spotting Water Damage

In the wake of Hurricane Sandy, it is estimated that over 230,000 vehicles sustained flood damage in the impacted region. Many of these vehicles may be advertised for sale without any disclosure of water damage. Consumers should exercise extreme caution when considering a used vehicle purchase in the coming weeks and months following this disaster. The Department of Motor Vehicles and the National Automobile Dealers Association (NADA) offers 10 inspection tips and additional resources that may help you detect significant water damage:

Check the vehicle's title history through the [National Motor Vehicle Title Information System \(NMVTIS\)](#) or other commercially available vehicle history report source. The report may indicate whether a vehicle has sustained flood damage.

- Examine the interior and the engine compartment for evidence of water and grit from submersion.
- Have the carpets been recently shampooed?
- Look under the floorboard carpet for water residue or stain marks from evaporated water not related to air conditioning pan leaks.
- Inspect the interior of the vehicle and under the carpets for evidence of rusting and visually inspect all interior upholstery and door panels for any evidence of fading.
- Check under the dashboard for dried mud and residue and note any evidence of mold or a musty odor in the upholstery, carpet, or trunk.
- Check for rust on screws in the console or other areas where the water would normally not reach unless submerged.
- Look for mud or grit in alternator crevices, behind wiring harnesses and around the small recesses of starter motors, power steering pumps and relays.
- Complete a detailed inspection of the electrical wiring system looking for rusted components, water residue, or suspicious corrosion.
- Inspect the undercarriage of other components for evidence of rust and flaking metal that would not normally be associated with the late-model vehicles.

While not fool-proof, these inspection suggestions provide you with information that may help you to avoid purchasing a vehicle with water or flood damage.

Here are additional publications for more information about used vehicle purchases and salvaged vehicles:

- [FFVR 26 What You Need To Know When Buying a Vehicle](#)
- [FFVR 33 Branded Titles – Look Before You Buy](#)
- [HTVR 13 How To Reregister a Salvaged Vehicle](#)
- [HTVR 32 Selling/Buying a Vehicle](#)